



Human Relations Commission

February 18, 2009 – 6:00 p.m. – **Minutes**
City Hall – Ashley Room – First Floor

View Agenda

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Present: Janice Baptist, Chairperson
William do Carmo, Member
Sgt. Franklin Eccleston, Member
Dr. Ferdinand Fuentes, Member
Estella Ribeiro, Member
Carol F. Walsh, Secretary

Also Present: Marcelina Pina-Christian, Human Services Coordinator

Chairperson Baptist called the meeting to order at 6:12 P.M.

Introductions and welcome to new Commissioner, Estella Ribeiro.

Discussion regarding day and time of HRC meetings – To be continued at March HRC meeting.

Acceptance of Minutes of Meetings:

MOTION by Dr. Fuentes to accept the Minutes of the November 2008 meeting – **SECONDED:** Sgt. Eccleston – No Abstentions – **UNANIMOUS** – **MOTION CARRIES**. It should be noted that Commissioner Ribeiro cannot vote at this time.

MOTION by Dr. Fuentes to receive the Summary of the December 2008 meeting, at which there was no quorum – **SECONDED:** Mr. do Carmo – **UNANIMOUS** – **MOTION CARRIES**. Dr. Fuentes noted that only Minutes of Meetings are posted, and not a Summary.

January 2009 Human Relations Commission meeting: Following parliamentary procedure, transcribed proceedings of this meeting was accepted as a Report – There was no vote to accept as Minutes – Modifications will be made to the format and presented in March for acceptance as Minutes.

Human Services Coordinator's Report – Marcelina Pina-Christian

Film Series: *Race, the power of an illusion* – Downtown Public Library

Episode One, The Difference Between Us – January 29, 2009 – Very successful

Episode Two, The Story We Tell – February 19, 2009

Episode Three, The House We Live In – February 26, 2009

MCAD Town Hall Meeting – Downtown Public Library – March 12, 2009

MA Human Relations Report

Complaint Intake and Status Reports:

Previous Complaint: Neighbor conflict – Referred to NB Police - Went to court – Out of HRC jurisdiction – Parties have since attended mediation with Department of Justice.

New Complaint: Two Complainants reported being harassed by another individual – Also reported that wife of one Complainant is also being harassed by same individual. Referred to NB Police

New Complaint: Complainant received driving permit from the Registry of Motor Vehicles using headphones with audio instructions in Spanish - Because of illness, he was unable to take road test within specified time period. RMV states that he will have to retake driving permit test. However RMV will not allow previous procedure, and test must be taken in English

Commissioners agreed the first step is to determine protocol used by the RMV to accommodate people who are mute, deaf, illiterate, have a language barrier, or other disability. HRC should also determine if an interpreter was available and why the complainant is not being allowed to take the exam in the same manner as previously. Sgt. Eccleston will be responsible for gathering the facts regarding this complaint. Based on the findings, HRC will determine if this should be reported to MCAD.

No Office Correspondence

MOTION By Mr. do Carmo to accept Human Services Coordinator's Report – **SECONDED:** Dr. Fuentes – **UNANIMOUS – MOTION CARRIES.**

Old Business:

Environmental Justice Policy:

Background:

In October 2008, members of the organization, *Wasted Away* appeared before the HRC regarding importance and benefits of having an enforceable Environmental Justice Policy in New Bedford. Mr. Eddie Johnson expressed his belief that this type of policy is under jurisdiction of HRC for development and enforcement.

On January 8, 2009, Chairperson Baptist and Carol Walsh met with above group. Objective was to obtain information to be brought back to HRC for determination of what type of role HRC would take in the matter of Environmental Justice Policy: 1) advisory; 2) leadership; or 3) no role at all.

At HRC meeting on January 21, Chairperson Baptist explained to Commissioners the concerns and opinions expressed at the January 8 meeting. Commissioners agreed that New Bedford needs an Environmental Justice Policy. Chairperson Baptist stated that she would continue with the fact-finding process in order to move this issue forward.

Chairperson Baptist then reported to Commissioners on information that she has since received: The Environmental Justice Ordinance will be developed and approved with input from the City Solicitor's Office, City Council, and the Office of Environmental Stewardship. Chairperson Baptist will inform the members of *Wasted Away*. It was agreed that HRC will promote the concept that equity and justice be a part of this Ordinance. Ms. Pina-Christian suggested that HRC needs to make a statement stating our position regarding equity and justice.

MOTION by Dr. Fuentes that the Human Relations Commission fully endorses the development of an Environmental Justice Ordinance for the City of New Bedford that should be vetted through all appropriate channels and be reflective of all stakeholders in the City of New Bedford – **SECONDED:** Mr. do Carmo – **UNANIMOUS – MOTION CARRIES.**

Discussion regarding the presentation of a Human Rights Award by this Commission was held. It was discussed that awards would be presented to recognize an individual in the community, a young person from a school, and an organization.

Discussion was held regarding the importance of mentoring by this Commission. It was agreed that HRC should become involved in mentoring of young adults, such as members the of Mayor's Youth Council.

Chairperson Baptist stated that she will make information available to Commissioners at our next meeting regarding service learning and the possibility of creating an internship position for HRC.

No program subcommittee reports.

Reflecting on the work that has been done by the Human Relations Commission since its inception in October 2007, Chairperson Baptist thanked members for their participation. All Commissioners expressed thanks to Chairperson Baptist for her leadership.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:35 P.M.

Next scheduled meeting: March 18, 2009

A true record attest: _____